DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 930 PS 029 391

AUTHOR	Peterson, David W.
TITLE	On the Road: In Search of Excellence in Middle Level Education.
PUB DATE	2001-01-25
NOTE	12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Winter Workshop of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (Minneapolis, MN, January 25, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Administration; *Educational Quality; *Equal Education; *Excellence in Education; Institutional Characteristics; Leadership; Middle School Students; Middle School Teachers; *Middle Schools; Principals; Program Descriptions; Scheduling; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Student Relationship; Team Teaching
IDENTIFIERS	Educational Leadership

ABSTRACT

Using the recommendations in "Turning Points 2000" as a point for comparison, this study examined how middle level instruction was being implemented in over 50 middle schools in 10 states, focusing on the balance between equity and excellence. Middle schools participating in the study were located mainly in suburbs of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Ohio; Rochester and Syracuse, New York; St. Louis, Missouri; and Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Orlando, Florida. The schools had received excellence awards, were feeder schools for highly rated high schools, or were in districts widely regarded as successful in their state and region. Information on the middle schools was collected through Web site examination and on-site visits with the principal, staff, and students. Among the main findings of the study are that the grades 6-8 structure was the most common, and almost all schools had a 7-hour day for students. Sixty percent of schools used an 8-period day. Longer instructional periods promoted innovative teaching and reduced discipline problems. There was much variety in how schools incorporated the traditional teacher-based advisory program. Schools found ways to build positive connections between adults and students, including extended off-campus retreats and field trips, service learning, and looping. The vast majority of middle schools organized teachers and students into teams. Team effectiveness was related to common planning time for teachers, team stability, and systematic staff development. Tracking was used frequently, especially in mathematics and language arts. The themes of building trust with staff and creating a shared vision were commonly reported by principals. All the schools had some mechanism of including parents in leading the school. (Contains 24 references.) (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
David W. Peterson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ED 451 930

On the Road: In Search of Excellence in Middle Level Education" by David W. Peterson. Paper presented at the Annual Winter Workshop of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, January 25, 2001.

The publication of Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century (Jackson and Davis, 2000) has inspired many educators to join the authors in looking back at the progress in middle level education over the past 10 years. Those of us who have been middle school principals over the span of this past decade have used this report as a mirror to view the programs and progress in our own schools. Not many of us, however, have had the opportunity to visit over 50 middle schools in 10 states and see first hand how middle level instruction is being implemented. A six-month sabbatical leave from my principal position allowed me this unique opportunity to study how fellow principals across the country are working with their staffs and communities to implement best practices in middle level education.

In Search of Excellence

The opportunity to spend six months traveling and researching middle schools was both a once-in-a lifetime pleasure, and a complex and puzzling task. The first challenge was to decide which 50 out of the roughly 19,000 middle schools in the country to study. I specifically wanted to see best practice in action, hoping to find programming features that could be brought back to my school and considered for implementation. Additionally, I wanted to see what type of middle school programming exists in communities where the primary driving force is academic achievement. Specifically, how do these schools balance equity and excellence? With this framework in mind I focused mainly on suburban schools in the metropolitan areas of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Ohio; Rochester and Syracuse, New York; St. Louis, Missouri; and Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Orlando, Florida.

Nine of the schools visited had received the Blue Ribbon Excellence Award within the past three years, and three of them were recipients in 2000. Twelve of the middle schools visited were feeder schools for high schools recently named to Newsweek Magazine's Top 100 High Schools (Newsweek, March 13, 2000). Most of the remaining schools visited held the distinction of being in school districts widely regarded as successful in their state and region.

The Road Ahead

Before leaving on the trip I armed myself with knowledge from the latest journals and books on middle schools. In particular I devoured Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century (Jackson and Davis, 2000), the long-awaited follow up to the authors' original study of middle schools in 1989. Would I find that middle schools are indeed following the recommendations of Turning Points 2000,? Are schools actively working to reduce or eliminate tracking? Are middle schools actually using time effectively to match instructional practices in their daily schedule? Do advisory programs play an integral part in the middle school program? Is teaming the

PS 029391

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

most prevalent organizational pattern, and are schools providing common planning time for teachers? Who are the leaders of the school and what strategies are they using to generate peak performance from staff? I found not only the answers to these guiding questions, but also an unexpected surprise or two along the way on this middle-school voyage.

Read the Book, See the Movie

Researching middle schools is easier than it was years ago due the help of the Internet. Of the approximately 14,000 middle schools in the country, I discovered that almost half of them have active Web sites. I visited hundreds of middle school Web sites, and this gave me valuable background prior to visiting schools. Studying this information gave a broad perspective on national trends in school programming. Visiting the school, however, gives the observer a different perspective, one that provides a better opportunity to assess the culture of the school.

As one principal said to me as I entered her office, "So, you've read the book, and now you're here to see the movie." Indeed each of my visits lasted about the same amount of time as the typical feature-length movie! The visit was a combination of a conversation with the principal, followed by a "walk and talk" tour of the school where conversations with staff and students often occurred. Unlike the Hollywood feature in which the viewer sees only what the editors select, however, the on-site visit allowed the observer to also see the "out takes," many of which told much about the character of the school.

Grades 6-8 Structure Most Common

The grades 6-8 middle structure is by far the most common model, with approximately 60% of middle schools in the United States reporting this grade structure (McEwin, 1996). The schools in this study mirrored this statistic, with 64% of the school being in a grades 6-8 structure. The next most popular structure, found mainly in Ohio, was the grades 7-8 (12%) and the grades 5-8 structure (10%). One school was studied in the grade structures of category of 6-9, 5-7, 4-7, and 6-12.

Doing the Day, Middle School Style

Middle school starting and ending times were, predictably, "all over the map" among this study group. The one common characteristic was the overall length of the day, with all the schools being within ten minutes either way of a seven-clock hour day for students. The majority of the schools began close to 8:00 am and ended around 3:00 pm. Two schools in Wisconsin began the earliest at 7:25 am, two middle schools in Ohio had the began at 8:45 am., and two Florida middle schools had the latest start times, 9:40 am. In almost all cases in this study group, the start times were determined by the need to interface the bus schedule with the elementary and high schools in the school district, and not by research on sleep patterns of adolescents.

The way that the middle schools divided these seven clock hours into instructional periods showed variety also, with schools dividing their day into a range of four to nine distinct periods. Six of the schools studied (13 percent) were using some form of blocking that each day created four instructional periods of at least 80 minutes each. The most common pattern, however, was found in approximately 60% of the schools, that being an eight-period day, with periods ranging from 40-43 minutes, and students

passing from one teacher to another at the end of each of these periods. Over half of the schools visited in Ohio and New York had a nine-period day, with classes running 38-40 minutes in length.

In many of the schools in the study, core teams had the ability to block time on a flexible basis, although principals were often quick to point out that teams used this option infrequently. It was of interest to note that approximately 40% of the schools studied had discontinued ringing bells between each period, perhaps as a way of accommodating and promoting the flexible scheduling of classes. Additionally, three schools had a system in place to provide longer periods of instruction for math and language arts classes. For example, one Wisconsin middle school had periods of 60 minutes per day for these classes, while all others were 40 minutes. This was a direct reflection, in the principal's opinion, of the need to prepare students for examinations in the areas of math and reading.

Block Scheduling Emerges

It is also of interest to note that, while the number of schools using a "double block" of instruction, of approximately 80-90 minutes, remains relatively small in this study (10-15%), those who were using this type of schedule spoke passionately in favor of this system. Reasons given for going to a system of longer periods often revolve around eliminating fragmentation for students eliminating an impersonal, factory-like environment for students and teachers (Canady and Rettig, 1996). While high schools have frequently used the semester-length course ("4 X 4" system), all of the schools using blocking in this study were using full-year blocked courses, with most classes meeting on an every-other-day basis ("8 X 2" system). One New York middle school was using a hybrid system of blocking, with a six day cycle. Each student met each class four times per week, twice in 40 minute classes, and twice in 80 minute blocks.

Longer Classes Promote Innovative Teaching

Many principals in schools using the traditional eight-period day of 40-42 minute classes talked of the limitations associated with that length of instructional period. Studies have shown that multiple class changes each day lead to a fragmented and hectic day for students, and makes it more difficult for close teacher-student relationships to develop (Peterson, 2000). Additionally principals in the study noted the teachers' continued reliance on teacher-directed activities during the short, single-period class session, a finding consistent with numerous shadow studies of teachers and students in middle schools over the past 20 years (Clark, 1994).

Comments from principals in schools with longer periods, however, tended to support recent research findings that the longer period of instruction encourages teachers to use interactive approaches in which students are expected to become engaged in their own learning (Hottenstein, 1998). Longer periods of instruction also make it easier for teachers to design learning experiences aligned with the vision statement of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, in particular, that "students have opportunities for both independent inquiry and learning in cooperation with others. They have time to be reflective and numerous opportunities to make decisions about their learning" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p.12).

Discipline Problems Reduced

Extending the instructional period to approximately 80 minutes has also produced positive results in reducing classroom discipline problems (Sanders & Epstein, 1998, p. 9). Among the schools visited in this study, one inner-city school principal noted that better connections were made between students and teachers in longer class periods, thus providing a rationale for the reduction in classroom disruptions. As one teacher noted, "both we as teachers and the students realize that we have to work out our difficulties. In a shorter class period it was much easier to just ignore the problems, knowing that it would be only a few minutes before it would go away." Another teacher cited the increase in the number of "little hallway chats" she was able to conduct with misbehaving students in the longer-blocked classes, indicating that it was easier to do this when students were working independently, something done infrequently in the teacher-directed style of the shorter class period.

Advisory Programs -- The Glass Half Empty?

Comprehensive advising and counseling has long been a key tenet of defining a "true middle school." The National Middle School Association's mission statement in This We Believe recommends that "the middle school should be organized so that every youngster has such an adult, one who has a special responsibility for the individual's academic and personal welfare. Home-base or advisor-advisee programs which provide individuals with regular opportunities for interaction with a small group of peers and a caring adult fill this need." (National Middle School Association, 1992). I had a special interest in finding out how middle schools in high performing districts were implementing comprehensive guidance programs, in particular the structure of the advisor-advisee program.

While all schools in the study recognized the need for creating a sense of community within the school, and for promulgating the values stated by the school, there was much variety in how the schools met these goals. It did not take me long to realize that the traditional "adviser-advisee" program had gone largely by the wayside in the schools visited. Twenty-six percent of the schools set aside a period of time daily, ranging from 15-33 minutes, and had an agreed upon curriculum (usually encompassed in a three-ring notebook distributed to teachers in pre-school workshop) to be followed by teacher-advisors. An equal number of schools (26%) had no period of time set aside, and had no curriculum. They added from three to five minutes to one of the class periods, normally the first period in the morning, for announcements and other administrative tasks. This "homeroom" could range from a small group of students in a remedial reading group to a group of 75 students in a performing music class.

The remaining schools, (46%) had a hybrid advisor-advisee program, with a separate period set aside, lasting from 10-15 minutes. During this time there was no pre-determined curriculum, but the time was to be used for a variety of purposes, with the intent being to allow teachers and students to interact and form positive relationships. Activities such as a food drive, organizing community service activities, having student council members give reports, and other "housekeeping" details were often observed in these schools.

Data collected in this study are consistent with recent research indicating that advisor-advisee programs remain the most difficult and least effectively implemented element of middle-school programming (Anfara and Brown, 2000). Even in the mid '90's, at what appears to be the peak of interest in adviser-advisee program, only 47% of middle schools reported having a teacher-based guidance program (McEwin, C. Kenneth,

1996). Numerous principals in this study replied, "we tried that, and it didn't work so well" when asked about a teacher-based advisory program. There is also evidence, both from this study and from other researchers, that the standards-based movement of prescribed curriculum and outcomes-based learning has eroded advisory programs and made it easier to abandon a separate advisory period and put those minutes back into the instructional program. (George, 2001). One principal reflected the pressure to focus on the academic program, stating, "we don't have much time for fluff in our program for students."

Building Community, Making Connections

While the glass, then, may look even more than half empty when it comes to advisor-advisee programs, schools in this study were nonetheless finding ways to build positive connections between adults and students. Principals interviewed in this study were well aware of the research suggesting that middle school students benefit from positive long-term relationships with a caring adult, even if they were less than enthusiastic about advisor-advisee programs. One principal talked about how each team in her building participates in an overnight retreat early in the year and that the value of this experience in bonding students and their teachers "far outweighs the value of an advisor-advisee program that doesn't work."

Over half of the schools in this study are implementing extended off-campus retreats and field trips. These multi-day experiences include trips to places such as Washington, DC, French-speaking cities in Canada and other places of historical significance in the school's region of the country. Another popular choice was to take an entire team or grade level on a multi-day learning experience at an outdoor environmental learning center, usually a distance of 100 or miles from the community.

Long Term Relationships Emerge

Principals and teachers in these schools maintained that these experiences led not only to the intended curriculum outcomes, but also to very positive long-term relationships with the students. Having a stated curricular objective for these trips appears to be a key selling point both for teachers and for parents, with the affective goals coming as important by product of the experience. Teachers and parents appear to be more reluctant, however, to support teacher advisor programs if the stated affective outcomes do not have a natural connection to the academic curriculum. One teacher stated that "it is easier for me to model appropriate behaviors for students and to connect character education with my daily activities in the classroom than to teach the 'lesson on respect' in a twenty-five minute advisory period on the last Friday of the month."

Connections with Parents

Field trips also gave teachers a chance to communicate with parents and to clarify the objectives of the trip, as one team in Ohio stated in their newsletter, "During this trip students learned to measure distance, time and speed. They also used various forms of technology to gather scientific data, and will use this data throughout the semester in their science classes. They also learned positive attitudes through cooperation with classmates on their projects" (Roche, 2000).

Connecting Through Service Learning

Service learning also appeared as an alternate strategy for promoting the development of positive values in students, and for bringing staff and students together in cooperative ventures. Approximately 30% of the schools studied had formal programs in place that took students into the community to perform service projects. In many instances these activities had a connection to an academic subject, while in others it was the adviser-advisee homeroom that organized the service project. Service learning has the potential to achieve the traditional goals of an advisory program without being viewed as "fluff" by staff, students and parents if it is implemented properly (Dietz, 2000).

Connecting Through Looping

In many other countries teachers typically stay with their students for more than one year (Darling-Hammond, 1997), but looping and has been much slower to catch on in this country. Paul George estimated in his 1997 study that only about 200 middle schools in the United States are using some form of looping (George and Shewey, 1997). Schools using looping have reported positive results in building a sense of community among teachers, students and parents (Bliggenstorfer, Jacobi, Jansen Mincemeyer and Vitale, 2000).

Fifteen percent of the schools visited in this study were using some form of looping, and these schools also reported an increased sense of community. Some schools were using multi-age advisory groups, keeping teachers and a majority (usually two thirds, in a three-grade school configuration) of the students together from year to year. Other schools moved teachers ahead to the following grade to stay with the students for two full school years, with, for example, sixth-grade teachers moving to the seventh-grade and staying with their core group of students. In these cases the school had the key ingredients that Pyle (1997) found to be essential for success, those being the unwavering support of the teachers involved, the passionate enthusiasm of the principal for this system and support from the parent community.

Teaming: The Driving Force of the Middle School

The glass may be half-empty or even running dry for adviser-advisee programming, but there is no such ambivalence of support for organizing teachers and students into teams. Indeed the glass is overflowing among this study group! The vast majority of the schools reported having "teaming" in place, and the on-site visits corroborated this data. This is an important finding in that the middle school movement of the past three decades has encouraged schools to bring together social and instructional organization that is more responsive to the human spirit, in particular the needs of the middle school student (George, 1992).

In the group of schools visited in this study, 92% reported being organized into interdisciplinary teams, defined as a combination of teachers from different subject areas who plan and conduct instruction for particular groups of pupils (Wiles and Bondi, 1981). By far the most common configuration was that of the academic core team of a language arts, social studies, math and science teacher. In some cases a special education teacher was assigned to a team, and often guidance counselors and administrators attended team meetings on a regular basis. Some schools successfully integrated exploratory teachers into the team on a part-time or intermittent basis, while in most cases the exploratory teachers did not have common planning time with the core teachers.

The team meeting appeared to be the heart of the teaming concept, the place where vital discussions were held regarding both students and curriculum. During one drop-in visit to a team meeting my host principal introduced the team to me, praising them as dedicated middle-level educators. One of the teachers quickly responded, "thanks, but we couldn't be as effective without each other." This sentiment is echoed broadly by the literature, suggesting that teams achieve more collectively than they would individually (Wormeli, 2000). Principals often spoke of the team as the "point of service" for students and parents.

Common Planning Essential for Teaming

If the team meeting is where the work of the team actually occurs, then it is essential that all teachers on the team have a common time during the school day for this purpose. The majority of the schools in this study had such arrangement for planning time. Those that did not were noticeably less effective and less enthusiastic about team activities, in particular the implementation of interdisciplinary curriculum. The actual implementation of interdisciplinary units of instruction, while not a primary focus of this study, was noted more frequently in teams that had common planning time on a daily basis.

Team Stability Promotes Creativity

Innovative programming with the context of the interdisciplinary team was note in many of the schools visited. Collaborative ventures included flexible grouping, flexible scheduling and interdisciplinary instructional activities. It was of interest to note, however, both from direct observation of teams and from comments from principals, that the incidents of these benchmarks of effective teaming seem to increase as the team develops a sense of community among the teachers. These anecdotal findings match Bembry's findings (1998, p. 23.) that "the healthy maturing of any system is marked by stability and role mastery." In a sense the concept of "looping" can be applied to teams by continuing their makeup over an extended period of time.

Mastering the role of team member does not happen just through membership on a team. Schools with the highest level of team effectiveness engaged their staff in activities designed specifically to increase a team's capacity to work together, with off-campus "team building" activities and retreats being a common feature. Principals also talked frequently about the value of "keeping the team together" for more than just a year or two. Rapid turnover in the teaching force was a common occurrence in the majority of the schools visited, suggesting that staff development activities for teams will be a crucial factor in keeping teaming a vital force in the school structure.

Staff Development for Teams

In addition to common planning time teams need the ongoing support of a systematic plan of staff development (Merenbloom, 1988). The prevalence of staff training and mentoring arrangements was a pleasantly surprising finding of this study. Already mentioned has been the in-service components designed specifically for promoting team development. The most effective schools in this study appear to have aligned themselves with a comprehensive system of training and development. In Wisconsin, for example, almost all of the schools in the study participated in broad-based staff development programs, including summer staff retreats at the University of Wisconsin-

Platteville. Also, schools in that state use the WAMLE (Wisconsin Association of Middle Level Educators) state convention at UW-Stevens Point as a gathering place for many of their staff, with three schools even having these as non-student days so all staff may attend.

The University of Wisconsin-River Falls also conducts an extensive teacher mentoring program that serves to help many middle level teachers get off to a good start under the guidance of a veteran staff member and university support (Monsour, 2000). Less common were school districts who conducted their own staff development training, with only 10% of the schools indicating that in-district training was the most common form of training for middle school staff. It appears that strong leadership at the state level, either from an affiliate of a national middle level organization, a national principals association, or a local university is crucial to filling the needs for staff development. In this study it was apparent that the most effective middle schools were receiving active assistance from a combination of all three of these important sources of staff development.

Excellence and Equity –The Status of Tracking

Organizing instruction appropriately for students with different abilities has taken many different forms. The most common form of organization at the middle school level is to use a system of tracking whereby students sharing similar learning characteristics or achievement levels are placed together (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, & Melton, 1993, p. 57.). No recommendation by the authors of Turning Points 2000, however, is delivered with more passion than the admonition to eliminate this practice in middle schools. Tracking, however, was found to be used frequently by schools in this study.

Tracking in math, through the use of accelerated classes, was used by all of the schools in this study. Schools varied in the numbers of students being placed in these advanced classes, ranging from 5% to 20% of the students in these classes. Beyond tracking in math, a good deal of variation existed. Thirty percent of the schools tracked in math only, 60% tracked in one additional subject area, and 10% of the schools tracked in two or more subjects in addition to math. Beyond mathematics, language arts was the most frequently tracked subject (50%) followed by science (30%),and social studies (8%). The remaining 12% of the schools who tracked subjects in addition to math were single incidents of schools who tracked in foreign language, technology and art. Three schools in the study were magnet schools in large metropolitan school systems. These schools were in essence tracked as a whole organization, drawing students with high levels of interest and aptitude in particular areas such as art and music, or math and science.

School Leadership

One of the most consistent findings in educational research is that high-achieving schools have strong, competent leaders (Valentine, Trimble, & Whitaker, 1997, pp. 337-341). The opportunity to visit with colleagues at their schools was one of the highlights of this road trip research project. The gender analysis showed 76% male and 24 % female, with 4% of the total (one African-American female, and one male) representing minorities. Most of the principals (86%) had been in their current principal position for five or more years.

It was of interest to listen to principals as they talked about their role as school leaders, particularly in light of the fact that most of them had been in their position for longer than five years. Many of them commented about how comparatively unproductive their first year or two on the job was in producing noticeable change in the school's instructional program. One principal, after having been a principal in his building for 14 years, reflected, "the first three or four years, we just stabilized the school, working on management issues and building trust. Then we really took off." The theme of building trust with the staff was a common theme among principals, and supports numerous studies that have found a trusting relationship between staff and a school's leaders a necessary ingredient in developing and sustaining school reform measures.

The concept of creating a "shared vision" was cited by many of the principals with statements such as, "this is a 'we' operation in this school," "we're all on the same page in this school," and "everything we do well is teacher-driven." Schools in this study consistently showed evidence of having a formal mechanism for receiving staff input. This group, often consisting of team leaders, department heads, or at-large staff representatives, was called names such as "staff council," "faculty forum," and "leadership council."

One principal talked about the need to keep the focus of the groups on the big picture issues of the school, such as the overall mission, in addition to the numerous day-to-day management issues. Another principal cited the need to include the entire staff in "thoughtful conversations" about important school issues. An example was cited of how the format of staff meetings has been revised to move away from information items and more toward staff reflecting on the vision and mission of the school as a whole.

Parental Involvement

All of the schools in the study had some mechanism of including parents in the process of leading the school. Some consisted of limited involvement of a small number of parents on a "site council." A number of other principals, however, went to great lengths to involve parents, and it appeared to be no coincidence that these were also high achieving schools with unusually high levels of parental support. Informal settings for open meetings with parents were being used by four principals in the study, such as "breakfast with the principal," "principal's brown-bag lunch," or "principal's tea."

Principals reported these events to be effective ways to provide important information to parents in an informal setting, and to gain insights from parents. Having parents come to the school setting to meet with staff, in this case the principal, is likely to make parent feel powerful, develop confidence and increase the likelihood they will attend other school activities (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. 207). These informal gatherings observed in this study were often lightly attended, with six to ten people attending. Nonetheless, these events send a clear message to the community about its desire to maintain and improve communication with parents (Sanders and Epstein, 1988, p. 11.).

The Road Ahead

So where are we in regard to development of the middle school concept in America? What are the challenges for the future, and what areas remain for further study? The findings of this study echo the summary of Jackson and Davis (2000, p. 5) in their

landmark publication, *Turning Points 2000* that "we are only halfway up the mountain, with the most important and perhaps most difficult part of the climb remaining." Having this opportunity to visit schools and hear their reflections on the climb so far, and hearing their optimism for the future, has been both professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling. The journey continues.

Bibliography

Bembry, J.(1998). Forming an educative community in the village. *Middle School Journal,* 30(1), 18-24.

Bliggenstorfer, H, Jacobi, P., Jansen, G., Mincemeyer, B. & Vitale, C. (2000, November). *Here we go loop-de-loop*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Middle School Association, St. Louis.

Canady, R.L., & Rettig, M.D. (1996). *Teaching in the Block: Strategies for Engaging Active Learners,* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.

Clark, S. N. & Clark, D.C. (1994) *Restructuring the Middle Level School: Implications for School Leaders,* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Dietz, M.I. (2000, November) *Ten tips for transformation through middle level service learning,* Paper presented at the 27th Annual Conference of the National Middle School Association, St. Louis.

Fullan, M. (1998). Leadership for the 21st century—breaking the bonds of dependency. *Educational Leadership,* 55(7), 6-10.

George, P, Stevenson, C., Thomason, J. & Beane, J.(1992) *The Middle School and Beyond*, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

George, P. (2001, January) The evolution of middle schools, *Educational Leadership,* pp. 40-44.

George, P. and Shewey, K. (1997) Maintaining Long-term teacher and student relationships, *Schools in the Middle*, ?(?) pp. 18-21

Hottenstein, D (1998). *Intensive Scheduling: Restructuring America's Secondary Schools Through Time Management,* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Jackson, A. W., & Davis, G.A. (2000). *Turning points 2000: Educating adolescents in the 21st century.* New York: Teachers College Press.

McEwin, C. Dickinson, T. & Jenkins. D. (1996) *America's Middle Schools: Practices and Progress, a 25 Year Perspective,* Columbus: National Middle School Association.

Merenbloom, E. (1988). *Developing effective middle schools through faculty participation,* Columbus: National Middle School Association.

Monsour, F. (2000, December) Winning pairs, *Principal Leadership*, pp. 62-65.

National Middle School Association. (1992) *This We Believe,* Columbus.

Peterson, D. W., Schmidt, C., Flottmeyer, E., & Weincke, S. (2000, November). Block scheduling: successful strategies for middle schools," Paper presented at the 27th Annual Conference of the National Middle School Association, St. Louis.

Pyle, A. (1997). Multiage grouping: Is it the right strategy for middle school? *Middle ground: The magazine of middle level education,*1(1), 12-14.

Roche, R.. (2000, Winter) Interdisciplinary field trip experience, *In the Middle: The Newsletter of the Ohio Middle School Association,* p. 8.

Sanders, M. G., & Epstein, J. L. (1998, August). *School-family community partnerships in middle and high schools: From theory to practice* [Online}. Available: www.csos.jhu.edu

Valentine, J.W., Clark, D. D., Irvin, J.L., Keefe, J.W., & Melton, G. (1993). *Leadership in middle level educatiojn: A national survey of middle level leaders and schools* (Vol. 1). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Valentine, J.W., Trimble, S., & Whitaker, T. (1997). The middle level principalship. In J. L. Irvin (ed.)., *What current research says to the middle level practitioner* (pp. 337-347). Columbus: National Middle School Association.

Wiles, J., & Bondi J. (1981) *The Essential Middle School*, Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co.

Wormeli, R.. (2000, February).One teacher to another. Middle school teams: not in name only," *Middle Ground: The Magazine of Middle level Education,* pp. 21-23.